

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 SSM-03 MCT-01 /074 W
-----210504Z 105451 /10
R 201605Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6268

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS
SUBJECT: MORE ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TEL AVIV 3565

1. WITH VIRTUALLY ALL CIVILIAN BALLOTS AND ABOUT HALF THE SOLDIERS' VOTES COUNTED, THE LIKUD APPEARS TO BE ASSURED OF 43 SEATS AND MAY EVEN END UP WITH 44 AFTER APPLICATION OF THE BADER-OFER LAW (REFTEL). THE ALIGNMENT IS ALSO EXPECTED TO BENEFIT FROM BADER-OFER AND TO GO FROM THE 32 SEATS INDICATED INITIALLY TO 33 (REFTEL). THE INDICATIONS AT THIS STAGE OF THE COUNT ARE THAT THESE VOTES MAY COME FROM THE FOLLOWING PARTIES: THE NRP MAY DROP FROM 12 TO 11; POALEI AGUDAT YISRAEL FROM 2 TO 1; AND SHELLI FROM 2 TO 1. (NOTE: SHELLI WITH TWO PROJECTED SEATS WAS INADVERTENTLY OMITTED FROM THE LIST IN PARA 1, REFTEL.) FLATTO-SHARON'S SECOND SEAT WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE TO THE POOL OF SURPLUS VOTES FOR THE EXPECTED BENEFIT OF THE LIKUD AND ALIGNMENT. IT IS STILL NOT CERTAIN THAT THE CITIZENS RIGHTS MOVEMENT WILL ACHIEVE THE NECESSARY MINIMUM.

2. ISRAEL RADIO REPORTED TODAY THAT THUS FAR IN THE
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IDF VOTE THE LIKUD IS RECEIVING 45 PERCENT, THE ALIGNMENT 23 PERCENT, THE DMC 16 PERCENT AND NRP 6 PERCENT. THE BROADCAST SAID THAT FINAL AND OFFICIAL RESULTS WILL BE RELEASED MAY 26.

3. IN THE MEANTIME, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE LIKUD IS PRESSING HARD TO MAKE A DEAL WITH DMC, DES-

PITE THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FORMER INCREASING ITS PLURALITY. (SOME OF THE LIKUD'S INDICATED GAIN SEEMS TO BE COMING AT THE EXPENSE OF PARTIES ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE IN A LIKUD COALITION--I.E., THE NRP AND PAY.) THE LIKUD STILL SEEMS TO ENTERTAIN A FADING HOPE THAT THE ALIGNMENT MIGHT JOIN THEM IN A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, IN ITS FIRST MEETING SINCE THE ELECTION, THE LABOR PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE VOTED AGAINST PARTICIPATION IN A LIKUD-LED COALITION UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. (THE JERUSALEM POST CARRIED A REPORT--NOT SEEN ELSEWHERE--THAT LIKUD LEADERS PROPOSED THAT PERES REMAIN DEFENSE MINISTER AND ZADOK JUSTICE MINISTER IF THE ALIGNMENT COMES INTO THE NEW GOVERNMENT. WHILE THE REPORT WAS DENIED BY SEVERAL OF OUR CONTACTS, IT PROBABLY REFLECTS THE STRENGTH OF LIKUD'S DESIRE FOR AS BROAD A COALITION AS POSSIBLE.)

4. MORDECHAI ZIPORI, EZER WEIZMAN'S AIDE IN MANAGING THE LIKUD CAMPAIGN AND #26 ON ITS KNESSET LIST, TOLD US FLATLY THAT WIZMAN WILL BE DEFENSE MINISTER AND LIBERAL HEAD SIMCHA ERLICH WILL BE FINANCE MINISTER. HE INDICATED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS UP FOR GRABS, DEPENDING ON THE SHAPE THE COALITION TOOK. OTHERS SAY THAT THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO MAY BECOME A SERIOUS BONE OF CONTENTION IN PUTTING TOGETHER A COALITION. ARIK SHARON'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN FEATURED HIM AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO PICTURE HIM IN ANY OTHER CABINET POST. THE QUESTION IS, WHAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELSE WOULD THE LIKUD OFFER SHLOMIZION TO BRING IT INTO THE GOVERNMENT?

5. WE HEAR THAT THERE ARE ALSO STRESSES AND STRAINS WITHIN THE NRP OVER JOINING A NARROW COALITION WITH THE LIKUD. NRP HEAD YOSEF BURG AND DAVID GLASS, NUMBER 8 IN ITS KNESSET LIST, ARE REPORTEDLY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PROSPECT OF SERVING IN A NARROW, HARDLINE COALITION. THEY ARE MORE ANXIOUS THAN THE YOUTH FACTION OF THEIR PARTY TO BRING THE DMC INTO A LIKUD-LED GOVERNMENT AND WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY TO THIS END.

6. FOLLOWING SOME INITIAL DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE DMC FAILED IN ITS GOAL OF BECOMING THE INDISPENSABLE PARTY TO ANY COALITION, DMC LEADERS SEEMED TO BE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS. AKIVA NOFF, #8 ON THE DMC KNESSET LIST, EXPRESSED A WIDESPREAD VIEW WHEN HE TOLD US THAT A LIKUD COALITION OF 61 OR 62 SEATS

WOULD BE UNSTABLE. HE POINTED OUT THAT UNLIKE THE ALIGNMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN ABLE TO COUNT ON A MEASURE OF SUPPORT FROM SUCH PARTIES AS MOKED (SHELLI) AND RAKAH EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE NOT IN THE ALIGNMENT COALITION, A NARROW LIKUD GOVERNMENT WOULD FACE A PRETTY SOLID PHALANX OF OPPOSITION IN THE KNESSET. NOFF BELIEVES THAT, IN FACT, HIS PARTY IS ESSENTIAL TO A BEGIN GOVERNMENT. AT ANY RATE, HE CLAIMS THAT THE DMC IS FOR THE MOMENT PLAYING IT COOL, WAITING FOR BEGIN TO CALL. HE SAID THAT MUCH DEPENDS ON THE JUNE 21 HISTADRUT ELECTIONS, WHICH HAS NOW TAKEN ON NEW IMPORTANCE AS A BELLWETHER OF THE COUNTRY'S FEELING. SHOULD THERE BE ANY REACTION IN FAVOR OF THE ALIGNMENT, IT WOULD CONFIRM THE VIEW OF MANY THAT THE MAY 17 VOTE WAS ESSENTIALLY A PROTEST AND NOT A MANDATE FOR THE LIKUD. THIS NEW EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTADRUT VOTE MAY SPUR BEGIN TO TRY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO FORM HIS COALITION BEFORE JUNE 21, WHEREAS THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC FOR THE SAME REASON COULD BE EXPECTED TO TRY TO DRAW OUT THE PROCESS UNTIL AFTER THE HISTADRUT ELECTION.

7. BECAUSE OF THE MONDAY JEWISH HOLIDAY (SHAVUOT), A LULL IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS EXPECTED THIS WEEKEND. THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES ARE SUSPENDING ALL ACTIVITY AND BEGIN, HIMSELF RELATIVELY OBSERVANT OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, IS ALSO EXPECTED TO EASE UP ON WHAT HAS BEEN A HECTIC PACE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV03607
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770181-0539
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770533/aaaabcdg.tel
Line Count: 151
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0ff7c58c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TEL AVIV 3565
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2426023
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0ff7c58c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009